

# The Real Bush Education Initiative: Stop the Growth of Federal Funding

Few budget decisions of the federal government in recent years have been more popular than the significant increases in financial support provided to local schools. Total federal spending for elementary and secondary education has grown from \$14.7 billion in fiscal year 1996 to \$32.8 billion in fiscal year 2002.

Even after increased enrollment and inflation are accounted for, federal support for local schools increased over that time period from about \$323 to \$624 per student.<sup>i</sup> That is a 93% increase — 12% a year on average. The increased flow of federal dollars has allowed schools to raise teacher salaries, increase standards for hiring new teachers, provide expanded training to existing teachers and cut class size.

Congress approved these increases in large part because of the overwhelming public sentiment for such assistance. That support has continued even in the wake of the events of last September 11<sup>th</sup>. A survey this spring indicated that 66% of voters felt that “improving education should be a top priority for Congress this year.” A total of 83% of Americans favor increased spending to raise teacher salaries so that schools could hire and retain good teachers— even if it means paying more taxes. The strength of public sentiment is further demonstrated by the fact that 78% of Americans support increased spending

on education even if it means a larger federal deficit.

As a governor, as a candidate for the White House, and as President, George W. Bush has been persistent in resonating public concern for better schools. In fact, education became exhibit A in the argument that he represented a new brand of Republicanism which he labeled “*compassionate conservatism*.” He emphasized education issues as governor of Texas. He campaigned for President as a proponent of more support for education. He dedicated significant amounts of time and public dialogue during his first year in office to the passage of the “*Leave No Child Behind*” Act, not only implying he favored more help to schools from the federal treasury but specifically authorizing large increases in a number of key program areas.



Figure 1 President Bush reading to school children in Washington, D.C.

Following the adoption of the new legislation, President Bush continued to visit schools and read to children in front of television cameras, emphasizing his stated position as an advocate for improving education.

There is only one real problem with respect to the President's record for supporting the nation's schools. **Within weeks of signing the "No Child Left Behind" Act he submitted a budget that stopped six years of steady progress in federal support to local schools dead in its tracks.** Instead of

the strong and consistent growth in support to local schools that the federal government has provided for more than a decade, the President's **budget holds aid to local schools virtually flat.** Furthermore, his Budget Director now insists that if Congress exceeds the budget request by even the smallest amount, he will veto entire appropriation bills. Now Congress is faced with the choice of supporting schools or supporting the President and his effort to reverse the trend of expanding federal support for local schools.

### Annual Percentage Increase In Real Federal Per Pupil Expenditures for Elementary and Secondary Education

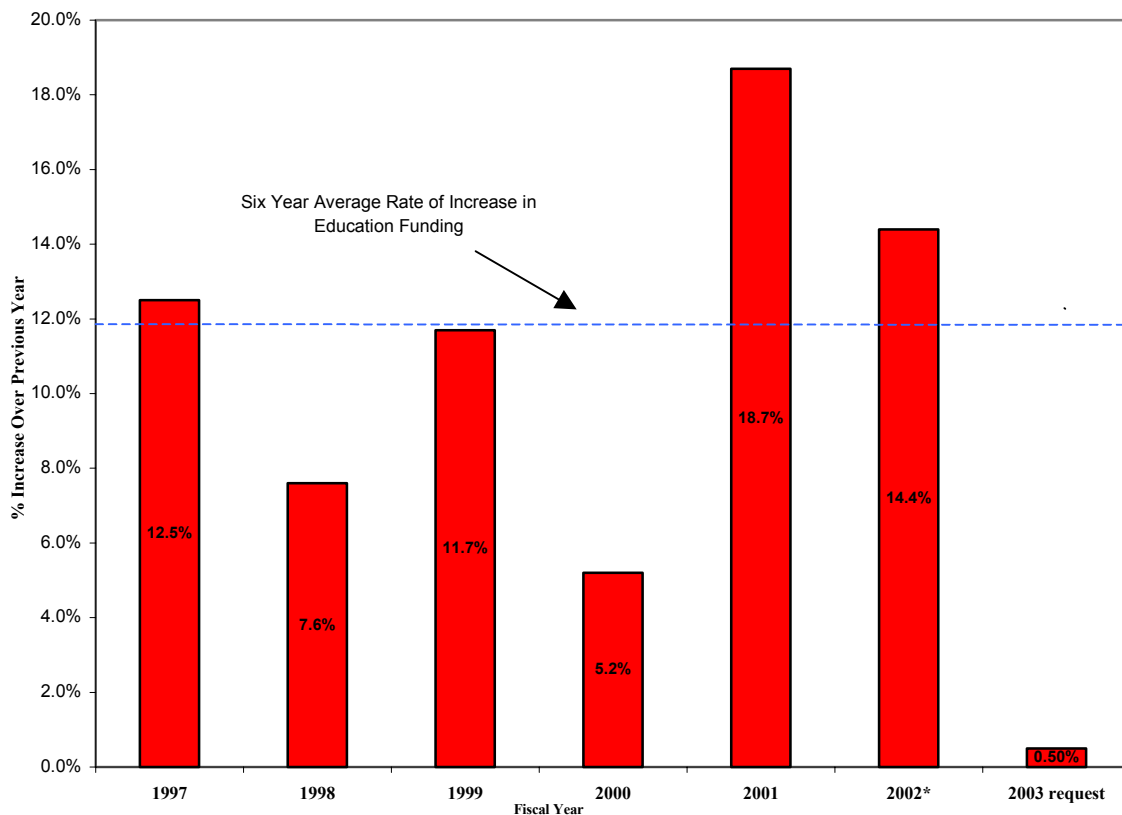


Figure 2 Over the past six years, per student, inflation adjusted federal education spending has grown by an average of 12% a year. The Bush "No Child Left Behind" budget would bring that growth crashing to one half of one percent.



**Figure 3 President Bush talks with school children in Washington D.C.**

## **Leaving Children Behind**

In naming his education legislation “*Leave No Child Behind*” the President touched on a sensitive and important issue not only for American schools but also for our entire society. The future of our labor force and our economy is heavily dependent on elevating the education and skills of all future workers. The solvency of our Social Security and Medicare systems is directly tied to the future earning power of our children.

Providing adequate educational opportunity to all levels of society is also critical to maintaining cohesion in our society and building consensus on matters ranging from trade to criminal justice and from welfare to war. Our capacity for national unity is dependent upon our ability to share some portion of the benefits of the nation’s economic growth among all segments of society.

But anyone who has examined the recent progress of our schools will find some extremely disturbing trends with respect

to both of these objectives. This is in part related to the changing demographics of our society.

We have three distinct types of students who are likely to be left behind: those who come from low-income households and whose parents on average have below normal educational attainment, those who have weak English language skills and those who have physical and emotional disabilities that interfere with learning. Each of these groups is growing in overall numbers and as a share of the overall student population.

Secondly, these children require more time, money and attention to educate than healthy, English fluent children whose parents have normal or higher levels of educational attainment. Yet, they tend to be concentrated in the same schools so that teachers are unable to provide them with additional attention. Thirdly, the schools in which these children are largely concentrated are in the poorest areas of the country, both urban and rural, with the lowest tax base and the lowest financial capability to hire qualified teachers or reduce class sizes.

About one third of the 53.6 million children now in elementary and secondary schools in America are at serious risk of being left behind.<sup>ii</sup> The achievement gap between these students and the rest of the student population remains large and has failed to close. It is clear that if much greater progress is not made, many of these children will be tax eaters rather than taxpayers.

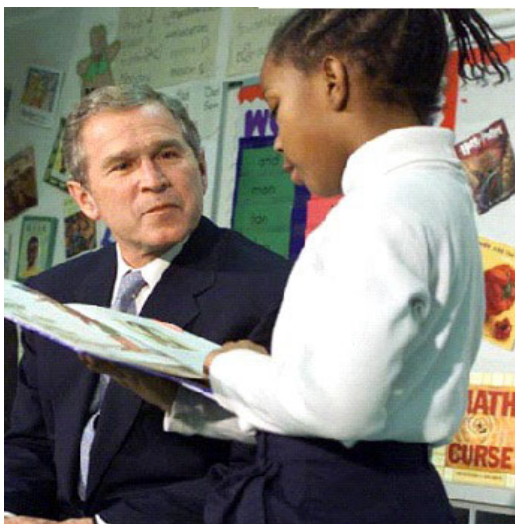
These children may well exacerbate rather than contribute to solving our nation’s future financial and fiscal problems. They may well become an

angry and disenfranchised segment of our population and will see little that connects them to the aspirations and goals of the rest of American society.

### **Coping with the Disadvantaged** *(The Great Title I Funding Hoax)*

Of the 53.6 million children currently enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in this country, 9.8 million or nearly 20% are from households defined by the Commerce Department as being in poverty. That would mean an annual household income of less than \$18,000 for a family of four or below \$11,900 for a parent with one child.<sup>iii</sup> An additional eight million children are close enough to the poverty line to receive free or reduced school lunches.

Elevating the educational attainment of such children has been viewed as an important national goal since the middle 1960s. As our economy has become more technologically based and the demand for skilled workers has continued to grow concern for meeting that goal has also grown.



**Figure 4** President Bush listens to child read in St. Louis.

The largest single conduit of federal resources to local schools for the purpose of elevating achievement among low-income students is Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The “*No Child Left Behind*” Act selected Title I as the principle mechanism for transforming the rhetoric of the legislation into a reality in the classroom.

One of the great problems that the United States has faced in improving the instruction of disadvantaged children is that they are heavily concentrated in school districts with little revenue or tax base from which to raise revenue. As a result a large portion of the children with the greatest problems in learning are in school systems that have the least to offer in meeting those problems.

Estimates of the additional cost required to provide adequate compensatory learning to children who are economically and social disadvantaged run in the neighborhood of 50% above and beyond the per pupil expenditure for children who are not disadvantaged.<sup>iv</sup> In other words, if the cost of teaching a non-disadvantaged child is \$7,000 per year, the compensatory cost of teaching a disadvantaged child could be expected to be about \$3,500 more and the total cost \$10,500.

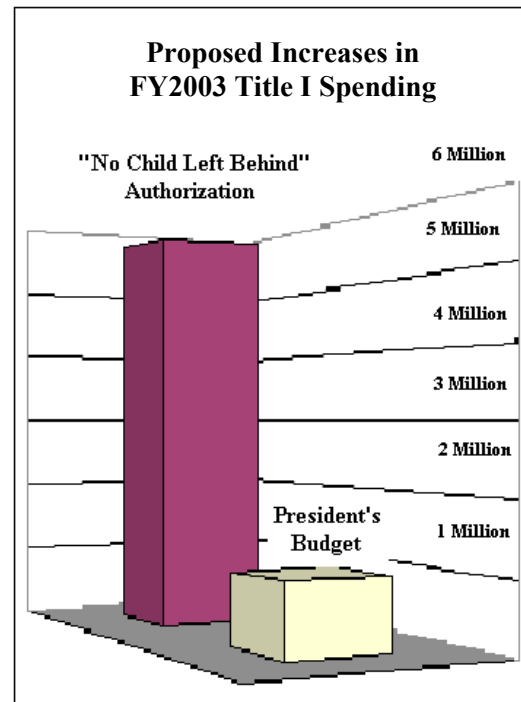
Title I authorizes payments from the U.S. Treasury to local school districts based on the number of low-income students in the school district. The “*No Child Left Behind*” Act establishes a target for federal support for educating low-income students of 40% of the national average per pupil education cost. For the 2003 school year, that payment would be about \$2,800 per poverty level student.<sup>v</sup>

Payments at that level, however, would have resulted in nearly tripling federal spending for the program in a period of one year. Spending for Title I would have risen from the \$10.35 billion available in fiscal year 2002 to \$28.9 billion in fiscal year 2003.<sup>vi</sup>

An agreement was reached to phase in the growth of federal education outlays. The first year funding for Title I was capped at \$16 billion, \$12.9 billion below the amount needed to fully cover the cost of compensatory education, but \$5.65 billion above the current Title I funding level. The cap is raised each year so that at least 70% of the full per child payment for compensatory education could be made by 2007.

The budget that President Bush submitted to Congress less than 4 weeks after the *"No Child Left Behind"* bill signing ceremony provided funding that was dramatically lower than the levels contained in the new legislation that he had just signed. Instead of a \$5.65 billion increase, he provided an increase of only \$1 billion. He in effect whacked 82% off of the proposed growth in the central program for implementing his widely touted new legislation.

But even the small fraction of the *"No Child Left Behind"* increase that did make it into the President's budget was largely a slight of hand. Numerous other federal education programs were cut or eliminated to make way for the President's show of commitment in Title I. These programs represented not only important federal financial support for improving our nation's schools but also represented some of the most innovative approaches for improving educational results without large outlays of additional tax dollars.



**Figure 5 Bush request for compensatory education funds only 18% of the increase his "No Child Left Behind" legislation proposed.**

Among the programs on the Bush hit list for termination is the very promising new *Smaller Learning Communities* ("small schools") Program that has demonstrated remarkable results in improving achievement among high school students by simply reducing the size of large high schools. Another effort scheduled for termination in the Bush budget is the *Mentoring Program* that will attempt with a small amount of money to leverage significantly more assistance to disadvantaged and at-risk students by facilitating the broader use of volunteer tutors and adult role models.

Despite the fact that 55% of students in schools designated as failing to meet minimum academic standards are in rural areas,<sup>vii</sup> the President is proposing to eliminate the only federal effort attempting to assist such schools in the serious problems they face in teacher



recruitment and certification, and in maintaining up-to-date instructional materials.

Remarkably, the President also proposed cutting the *Comprehensive School Reform Program* by 24% below last year's level despite the widely recognized role that program has had in boosting achievement, particularly in low-income schools.

In total, education programs that are being eliminated provided the President with more than \$1 billion in savings below current year spending levels. That is more than the size of his proposed Title I increase. The irony is that the funds that are proposed for termination are in many instances targeted on the same schools and intended to benefit the same students targeted by the President's Title I increase would provide funding for.

It appears that rather than increasing assistance to Title I children who are endanger of being left behind he has simply changed the funding spigots.

### **Educating Children With Limited English Language Skills**

One thing that we know for certain about the American workforce in 2020 is that a very large portion of workers will have learned English as a second language. Our economic prosperity and social well being will be very much dependent on how well we integrate and educate these individuals.

As recently as 1980, there were fewer than one million such children in our nation's schools. During the 1999 school year, the number was estimated at

3.7 million—about 7% of total school enrollment.<sup>viii</sup>

A decade ago, such students were heavily concentrated in only three states, California, Texas and New York. Since the early 1990s, however, new immigrants have been distributed much more evenly across the country. During the seven years between 1992 and 1999, the states of Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee collectively experienced a tripling in the number of students with limited English proficiency.

These children present obvious challenges to any school since intensive language training must be integrated into the regular school curriculum. They present an even greater challenge to schools that have not previously had the resources needed to educate non-English speakers. In addition, a significant number of recent immigrants have limited prior schooling—20% of such high school students have missed at least two years of schooling since age six.<sup>ix</sup>



**Figure 6 President Bush reads to children in New Mexico.**

The “*No Child Left Behind*” Act formally recognized the risk faced by such children. For the first time the federal government mandated that all children who have apparent difficulty speaking English must be formally assessed on an annual basis to determine how well each reads and speaks English in order to determine what instructional services each may require to fully meet state academic standards. States failing to raise the academic achievement of these children face the possible loss of federal funds.



Figure 7 President Bush talks with students in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

*"The truth of the matter is we're not educating every child right now. We're letting a lot of them just go on through--the tough to educate...If you don't speak English, or the mothers and daddies don't speak English as a first language, let's just move them through. That's going to quit, as far as I'm concerned. That's not the America I know."*

**President Bush, Clarke Street Elementary School in Milwaukee**

The Act also provided an open-ended authorization to allow the federal government to provide increased support to local schools. That, however, was unnecessary leeway for the President's budget advisors. They recommended that the new *Language Acquisition State Grant Program* created in the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act be funded at exactly the same level as the previous English language training programs were funded in fiscal year 2002. This means that not only would schools get no adjustment for inflation to operate these programs in the coming year but they would also have to meet the costs of enrollment growth and the new mandates entirely out of their own funds.

It is estimated that comprehensive language instruction for children with limited English language backgrounds costs at a minimum between \$600 and \$700 per student.<sup>x</sup> It is also estimated that there are more than four million such students enrolled in the current school year.<sup>xi</sup> Based on the growth in enrollment of such students over the course of the past decade, there will be about 300,000 more students who have difficulty speaking English in the coming school year that will be financed by the fiscal year 2003 federal budget. As a result, the funding level requested by the President will provide local schools with about 10% less money per child after adjusting for inflation and the increase in non English proficient students. That will be the most noticeable impact of the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act in dealing with this group of students other than the mandate that schools perform student assessments.

## Paying the Cost of Educating Children with Disabilities

For nearly three decades the federal government has been heavily involved in ensuring that the educational needs of children with physical, mental and emotional disabilities are fully met. Legislation placing highly specific mandates on local schools for assessing and assisting children with disabilities was passed prior to President Bush taking office. As a result, the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act did not reauthorize this portion of education law.

The real problem that local schools face with respect to disabled children is that they are required to provide a free appropriate public education to address the needs of these children, even if they do not have the additional resources to do so. As a result, numerous other problems faced by local schools are forced aside to meet the mandate for serving students with disabilities.

A broad national bipartisan consensus has developed that the federal government should pay a much larger share of the costs of that mandate. The 1997 *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (IDEA) reiterated the goal that the federal contribution toward the cost of educating each disabled child should be 40% of the average cost of educating a child with no disabilities. For the coming year that cost is estimated to be about \$7400 making the federal payment a little less than \$3000 per child—a relatively modest commitment given that school districts are now spending on average well over \$16,000 per student to provide appropriate educational services to each disabled child.<sup>xii</sup>

But, with the total number of students with disabilities expected to increase by about 100,000 students to 6,580,000 students next fall, the almost \$3000 per student payment would require a total appropriation of \$19.5 billion in fiscal year 2003 – nearly \$12 billion more than the amount appropriated for the current year.

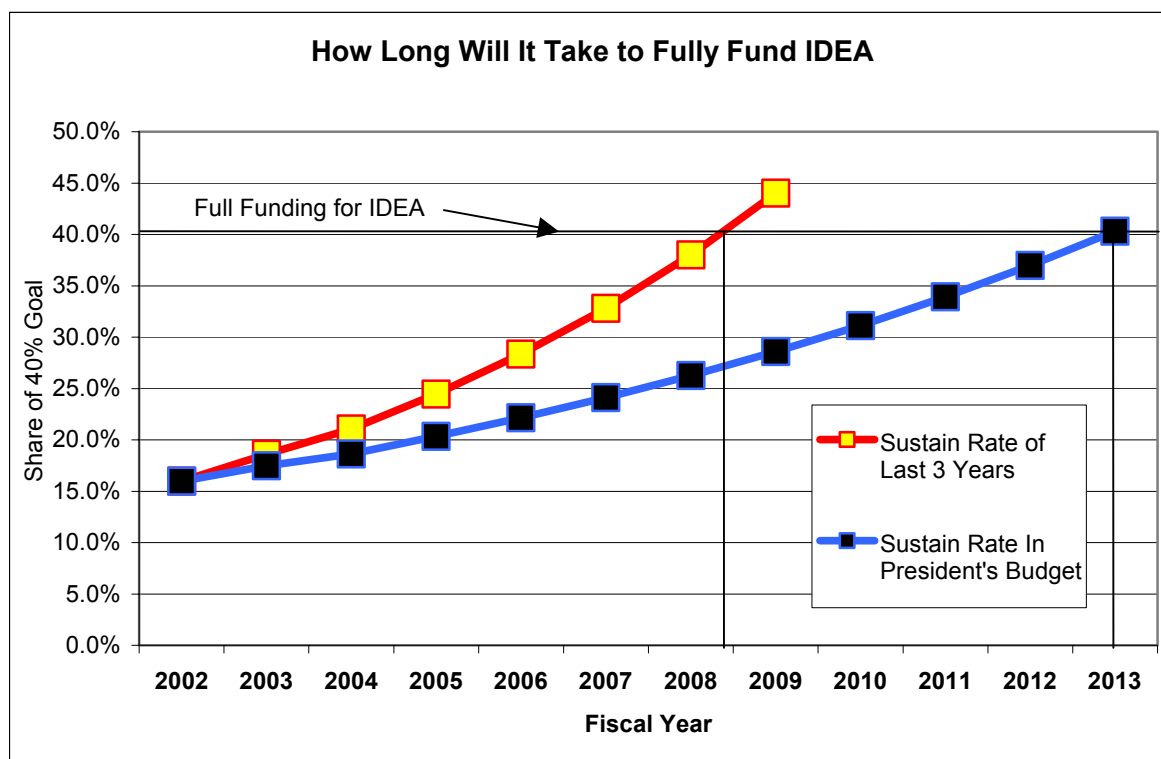
Because budget constraints make reaching the 40% target impossible in a single year, the Congress has committed itself over the last three years to annual increases averaging more than 20%. If that commitment were carried forward it would allow the country to reach the 40% target before the end of the current decade.

The IDEA increase contained in President Bush’s budget falls more than half a billion dollars short of what is needed to reach the 40% target within a reasonable time period. The rate of growth for IDEA funding in the President’s budget is less than two-thirds of the average rate of the last three years and, if continued, will delay reaching the goal of full funding by at least four years.



Figure 8 Eight new “little red school house” entrances to the U.S. Department of Education offices in Washington D.C. were purchased at a cost of \$98,630 to underscore the Administration’s commitment to the concept of “*Leaving No Child Behind*”.





**Figure 9** President Bush's fiscal year 2003 budget cut the growth of federal payments to local schools to cover the cost of educating children with disabilities to only two-thirds the level Congress has committed to during the last three years. At the slower pace, it will take four additional years to reach the goal of full funding.

## Placing a Freeze on Homeless Children

Any serious effort to ensure that “no child is left behind” would probably face its most severe challenge in dealing with children who are homeless. Amidst the prosperity of the past decade, the numbers of homeless in America have grown steadily and children are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

Last year, the Department of Education reported that the number of homeless children had increased by 11% in a period of only three years, growing from 841,700 in 1997 to 930,200 in 2000.<sup>xiii</sup> The U.S. Conference of Mayors

estimated that requests for emergency shelter by families with children increased by an average of 22% in 2001,<sup>xiv</sup> suggesting that the number of homeless children today may exceed one million or 2% of all school age children.

The Department of Education reports that nearly 153,000 students or 23% of all homeless children do not attend school on a regular basis, including 86,000, students who are not enrolled in school at all.<sup>xv</sup>

The size and seriousness of challenge which homeless children present to any effort for educating all children was clearly recognized in the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act. The new legislation

authorized increased funding for the *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program* to permit school districts to reach out to these children, and provide transportation and other support services necessary to permit them to attend and succeed in school.

Unfortunately, this is yet another area where the commitment made by the legislation is undermined by the White House budget advisors. Under the Bush budget, the homeless education program is frozen at last year's level of \$50 million. Because of inflation, about 8000 fewer homeless children will receive help next year due to the Bush budget freeze. In contrast, the additional funding authorized under the "*No Child Left Behind*" Act would allow an additional 130,000 homeless students to receive services.<sup>xvi</sup>

## **Improving Our Schools for All Children**

As the prior discussion indicates, the federal government plays a large and until this year, rapidly growing role in providing the resources necessary to prevent so many of our nation's school children from being left behind. It plays a second role in our nation's education effort that is less expensive but equally important. That role is as an innovator to help local school boards recognize emerging problems and opportunities in education, and to find new ways of using existing tax revenues more effectively in the classroom.

These efforts not only help to prevent children from being left behind, they help make our schools better for all children. Unfortunately, it is this role of the federal government that has been

singled out for the most brutal treatment in the President's budget.

The role of educational innovator has fallen to the federal government simply because it is neither practical nor efficient for each of the nation's 15,000 school boards to maintain a research budget or monitor the success of other school districts across the nation with new approaches to administering schools or helping children learn. It is also difficult for communities to identify and respond in a timely way to emerging social trends that sweep across the country and affect various elements of society including our schools.

### ***After School Centers***

One example of such a trend is the rapid increase in the last several decades of two earner families and of single parent families in which the parent works one or more jobs. This trend has resulted in large numbers of school children that return home to an empty house or simply remain on the streets between the end of school and the early evening period when their parent(s) return from work.

The Census Bureau estimates that 7 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 have no parent at home when their school day is over.<sup>xvii</sup>



**Figure 10 President Bush visits with students in Tennessee.**

Numerous studies have indicated that the lack of supervision of children in this time period has numerous consequences for the children, the community and the ability of schools to motivate children toward academic achievement.

As a result, the federal government initiated a program in 1995 that provided school districts with funds to set up after school centers. These centers not only provide children with academic support and direction toward more constructive activities, but also provide help with homework that many students find difficult to get at home.

Local school systems have shown enormous interest in these centers and federal funding has allowed enrollment in after school centers to jump from 50,000 in 1998 to 1.3 million this school year. Despite an 87% increase in funding in 2001, local school districts submitted four times as many applications for after school centers as the available funds could cover. Of the 2780 applications for after school center grants, 2086 had to be rejected because of insufficient funds.

Studies have already demonstrated a correlation between participation in quality after school programs and academic achievement. A recent evaluation of school-based, after school programs found that 80% to 90% of parents reported that after school care was helping their children to stay out of trouble, try harder in school and learn new skills.

The “*No Child Left Behind*” Act authorizes funding for after school centers through the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program*. This program helps schools and community-based organizations provide

academic tutoring and enrichment activities in music, art and technology in a safe and secure environment before school, after school, and during the summer. The Act converted the after school program from a federally administered to a state-administered program, with new funds targeted on low-performing, high-poverty schools.

The “*No Child Left Behind*” Act authorizes \$1.5 billion for after school centers in fiscal year 2003—50% above current levels and enough to enroll an additional 580,000 children into after school centers. Unfortunately the President’s budget goes in the opposite direction. By freezing the program at last year’s funding level and providing no adjustment for inflation, the

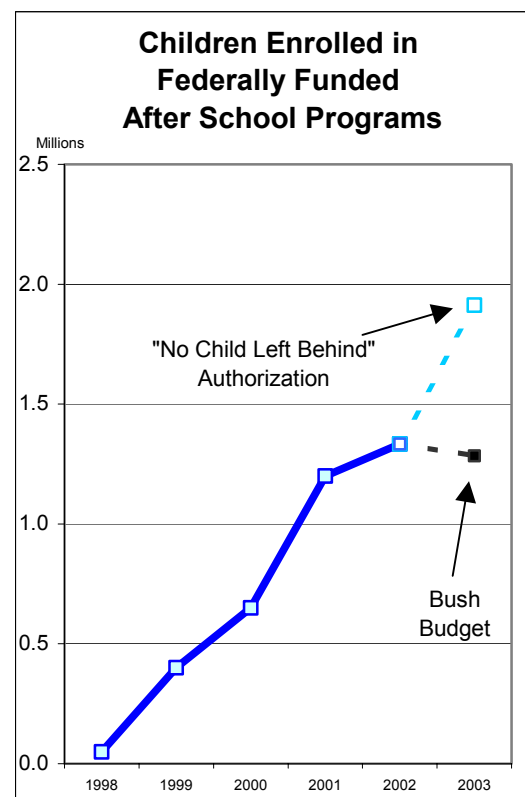


Figure 11 Bush budget cuts the number of children who can participate in federally sponsored after school centers by 50,000 below the current level.

Administration will force 50,000 children to be eliminated from participation in after school programs.<sup>xviii</sup>

### ***No Improvement in Teacher Quality***

Most education practitioners and policy makers agree that substantial improvement in the academic performance of American school children will not be achieved without a significant investment in training for America's teachers. There is a solid consensus that an effective teacher is key in raising student classroom performance.

The Department of Education estimates that approximately 6% of the teaching force lacks full certification – nearly 190,000 teachers.<sup>xix</sup> According to the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, about 27% of all *new* teachers lack one or more of the education requirements needed to become fully licensed to teach.<sup>xx</sup>

About 28% of all the teachers who teach one or more classes in math, science, social studies, and English in grades 7-12 lack an undergraduate or graduate major or minor in the subject taught. This means approximately 200,000 secondary school teachers nationwide are teaching at least one class in a subject that does not match their qualifications (i.e. teaching “out-of-field”).<sup>xxi</sup>

While nearly all schools face teacher quality problems, high-poverty schools face the greatest challenges and need the very best teachers. A disproportionate number of new teachers are assigned to teach the most vulnerable students in high-poverty schools. Moreover, according to a new analysis from The

Education Trust, classes in high-poverty schools are 77% more likely to be assigned to an “out-of-field” teacher than classes in low-poverty schools.<sup>xxii</sup>

Under the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act, all teachers in core academic subjects (English, math, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography) must be “highly qualified” by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. School districts must make annual progress toward meeting this deadline. Further, all Title 1 teachers newly-hired after the start of the 2002 school year must be “highly qualified” under the Act. The *Teacher Quality State Grant Program* is the primary federal program designed to help teachers meet these new qualification standards and to reduce class sizes, especially in the early grades.



**Figure 12 President Bush meets with teachers and students in Hamilton, Ohio.**

the level needed to simply keep pace with inflation and \$404 million or 12% below the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act authorization.

At the funding level contained in the new Act, about 408,000 teachers could receive mentoring and high quality



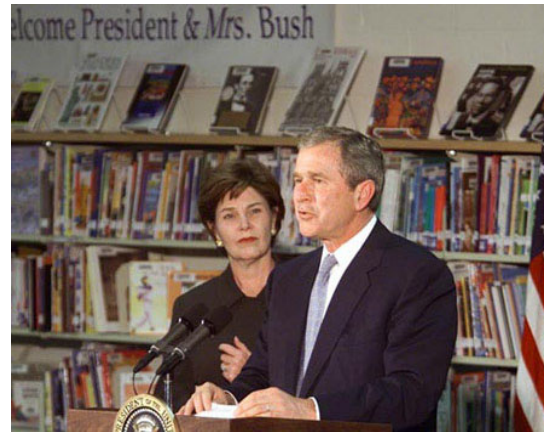
professional development. In contrast, the Bush request would support only about 316,000 teachers – 92,000 below the level supported in the new Act and 16,000 fewer than in the current year.<sup>xxiii</sup> Accordingly, an estimated two million<sup>xxiv</sup> fewer students would benefit from having highly trained teachers in front of their classrooms under the Bush budget compared to the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act.

### ***School Library Initiative is Abandoned***

Helping children to become good readers has been one of the hallmarks of the President’s education agenda. Indeed, “reading is the new civil right in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” is a frequent phrase used by the President when he talks about education.

While we have always known that the school library is an important source of reading material for students, there is now strong evidence suggesting that student access to high quality school libraries plays a much more important role in determining student success in reading than has been recognized previously.

This information was in fact underscored in a recent White House Conference on School Libraries hosted by First Lady Laura Bush. One of the papers presented to the White House Conference, a 2000 study of school library programs in Colorado, found that



**Figure 13 President and Mrs. Bush face television cameras in the school library of Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Mo.**

state test scores for elementary students with access to updated libraries were up to 14 percent higher than for students at schools with older collections.<sup>xxv</sup>

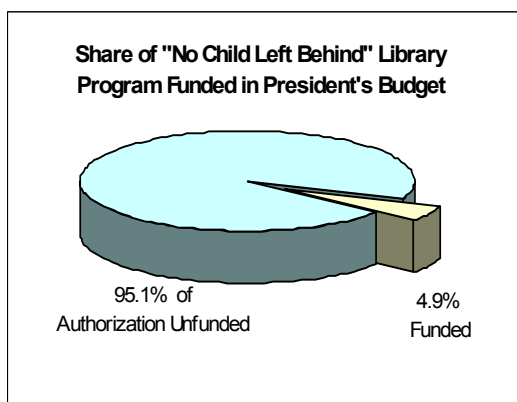
These findings have been replicated in studies in Alaska, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Oregon, and New Mexico – all showing that when school libraries have higher levels of professional staffing, larger collections of print and electronic resources, and more funding, students tend to earn higher scores on state reading tests.

Many of today’s school libraries fail to meet the minimum standards that experts have concluded are important if those schools are to succeed in fostering a love of reading or even basic literacy skills. According to the American Library Association, 20 books per child is a minimum number of books that should be maintained in school libraries. A very large portion of our schools, however, falls below that standard. The California Department of Education, for example, indicates that in 1999 the average number of school library books per student in grades kindergarten through twelve was 11.9.

Even more important is the quality of books and that is probably the greatest failing of most school libraries. A huge share of the books on many school library shelves explain a world in which Communists rule the Soviet Union, apartheid is legally enforced in South Africa, the Hubble Telescope does not exist and the atom consists of only three particles, the proton, the neutron and the electron. The president of the American Association of School Librarians has estimated that the average age of school library books across the country is somewhere between 20 and 40 years.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The Department of Education reported in 1998 that children who attend high-poverty schools are more likely than their wealthier counterparts to attend a school without a full-time librarian and with smaller library collections.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In the face of the emerging evidence on the importance of school libraries, the “*No Child Left Behind Act*” authorizes a new program, *Literacy Through School Libraries*, to help students—particularly in high-poverty schools enhance their reading and literacy skills through



**Figure 14 Evidence of importance of school libraries to student achievement goes unheeded in Bush budget.**

improved library materials. The program helps school districts update their collections of books and materials, acquire technology, enhance professional development for school librarians, and expand access to school libraries during the hours before and after school. The Act authorizes \$256 million in fiscal year 2003 for the school library program.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The Bush fiscal year 2003 budget totally rejected that initiative proposing school library funding at \$12.5 million, 5% of the new authorized level and the same level appropriated in fiscal year 2002 under the new authorization.

At the authorized level as many as 513 school districts could receive federal assistance to develop well equipped, well-staffed library media centers. The “*No Child Left Behind*” funding could buy an average of five new library books for each of 2.5 million children. In contrast, under the Bush budget, only an estimated 25 school districts would receive grants. Under the Bush request, funding would be sufficient to buy an average of five new library books for only about 124,000 children – 2.4 million fewer children than under the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act.<sup>xxix</sup>

### ***Slashing Educational Reform Efforts***

During the 1980s, people concerned about school improvement began to recognize the importance of doing more than simply adding additional resources to existing efforts to boost educational achievement. We had to find better ways to teach children and we had to make the information on these new approaches available to local school systems.

A leading proponent of school change was David Kearns, a former CEO of the Xerox Corporation who left private industry to become Deputy Secretary of Education under the previous Bush administration. Kearns mobilized business and private think tanks to look at new models for organizing schools and raising achievement levels.

In 1997 the Obey-Porter amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education appropriation bill initiated a new federal effort to encourage local schools to examine the models that Kearns, his colleagues and others in the education reform movement had put forward and adapt those models to their needs.

That effort became known as comprehensive school reform and has been the principle tool of the federal government to improve the effectiveness with which schools use state, local and federal tax dollars.

The “*No Child Left Behind*” Act recognized that comprehensive school reform is a critical part of any strategy aimed at turning around low-performing



**Figure 15** President Bush and Secretary Paige listen to a student at Vandenberg Elementary School in Michigan and praise the results of a program their budget cuts by 24% below prior year levels.

schools. The “*No Child Left Behind*” Act authorizes such sums as necessary for the program in fiscal year 2003.

In May of this year, President Bush and Secretary Paige recognized the remarkable turnaround in student achievement of one of the schools that has participated in the comprehensive school reform effort. In 1992, only 24 % of students at the Vandenberg Extended Year Elementary School in Southfield, Michigan scored “proficient” in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program.

After receiving a federal grant under the *Comprehensive School Reform Program* and using the grant to implement the *Co-Nect* model for sustainable school improvement, the school is at the opposite end of the state school performance curve. In 2001, 93% of Vandenberg’s students scored “proficient” – far above the state’s average of 60%.

President Bush told the teachers and students at Vandenberg, “*This school doesn’t quit on kids and that’s why its heralded for excellence...We have responsibilities. The federal government has responsibilities. Generally, that responsibility is to write a healthy check.*”

The Bush fiscal year 2003 budget includes \$235 million for comprehensive school reform grants, a \$75 million (24%) cut below the current year level of \$310 million. If the *Comprehensive School Reform Program* had received only the prior year funding level adjusted for inflation it would have allowed an additional 1,200 schools enrolling approximately 642,000 students to restructure their efforts

using the successful practices of Vandenberg Elementary School.<sup>xxx</sup> Under the budget that was submitted, those children will be left behind.

## **Can the United States Afford Better Schools?**

There is no question that improving schools is expensive. Given the nation's school age population of more than 53million children, it could not be otherwise. The average \$7,400 per child we are now spending as the result of contributions from local, state and federal revenues is simply not enough to either pay teachers at a level that will attract the quality of applicants that good schools require or hire enough teachers to reduce class sizes to the levels that serious efforts to raise academic achievement would necessitate.

We also have serious problems with respect to the quality of buildings in many communities and as discussed earlier, significant efforts are required to upgrade the skills of the existing teaching force.

A paper published by this staff a little more than one year ago examined the cost of meeting a number of goals that are frequently discussed in terms of improving the quality of our schools.<sup>xxxi</sup> These included cutting class sizes to 18, raising salaries for teachers from 62% of what other college graduates receive to 80% and cleaning up the \$127 billion backlog in the maintenance and repair of school buildings.



**Figure 16 President Bush addresses an audience at a magnet school in Little Rock, Arkansas.**

This growth path in federal support of local schools would have boosted the total federal annual budget for elementary and secondary education to a level of a little more than \$70 billion and brought education outlays to about 5% of total federal spending.

The fiscal year 2002 appropriation for education signed by President Bush last December, maintained the momentum necessary to achieve that goal in roughly a four-year time frame.

It is therefore a great irony that the prospects for significant improvement in American schools were reversed only weeks following the signing of the "*No Child Left Behind*" Act.

It is hard to know the extent to which the President is aware of the great disparity between his frequent public appearances in support of education and what is actually in the budget he sent to Congress.

As Paul Krugman pointed out in the New York Times in August, "there is an inexorably growing gap between the image and the reality of the Bush administration's policies."



All that we can say is that schools remain simultaneously a favorite “photo-op” of the White House advance staff and a favorite target of White House budget staff.

As recently as 1996 the federal government was contributing only 6.6% to the total cost of elementary and secondary education.<sup>xxxii</sup> Today, the federal share of the burden has jumped to 8%.<sup>xxxiii</sup> If we were to adhere to a spending path that continues the progress of recent years through fiscal year 2006, the federal government’s share could exceed 13%.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The heavy cost of preventing a significant portion of the children now lacking access to quality schools will require an effort at least that large. There is simply no other way to significantly moderate the extraordinary inequality between the resources available in rich and poor school districts.

Can we afford it?

One answer is to simply look at the \$1.3 trillion in tax breaks that the Congress has handed out in recent years. Only a fraction of that amount would make major progress in improving our schools within reach.

Another answer was supplied only days ago by the White House economic advisor. In an interview Lawrence Lindsey dismissed the economic consequences of spending on a war with Iraq. He estimated the cost might be 1% to 2% of the national gross domestic product (\$100 billion to \$200 billion) and said that it would not seriously affect interest rates or add a great deal to the \$3.6 trillion federal debt. As a one-time war cost over one year, the estimated expenditure, Mr. Lindsey said, was “nothing.”

\*\*\*\*\*

At the end of this report are tables that compare estimated state allocations under the Bush fiscal year 2003 budget and the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act for the programs discussed in this report. In those cases where the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act authorizes such sums as necessary in fiscal year 2003, the fiscal year 2003 authorization level assumed in the tables is the fiscal year 2002 authorization level adjusted for inflation.

---

<sup>i</sup> Per student, inflation adjusted federal expenditures are estimated to be \$323 in fiscal year 1996, \$363 in fiscal year 1997, \$391 in fiscal year 1998, \$437 in fiscal year 1999, \$459 in fiscal year 2000, \$545 in fiscal year 2001, and \$624 in fiscal year 2002. Figures are derived from annual elementary and secondary appropriations, and the fiscal year 2003 request excluding funds proposed for mandatory federal retirement accrual costs, adjusted to 2003 dollars by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Implicit Deflator, and divided by annual elementary and secondary school enrollment. GDP Implicit Price Deflator data are from the Council of Economic Advisors (February 2002), *Economic Report of the President*, and the Congressional Budget Office (March 2002), *Analysis of the President's Budgetary Proposals for Fiscal Year 2003*. School enrollment data are from the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), *Projections of Education Statistics to 2012*.

<sup>ii</sup>The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 53,566,000 children are enrolled in grades kindergarten through 12 in the 2002 school year. *Projections of Education Statistics to 2012*, page 13. The Congressional Research Service estimates that approximately 35% of public school students are eligible for free and/or reduced price school lunches.

<sup>iii</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, *Poverty Thresholds for 2001*, August 22, 2002.

<sup>iv</sup>See Thomas B. Parrish, et. al. (1994), *Estimating the Cost of Enabling Special Needs Populations to Achieve High Standards of Learning*. This study estimated the marginal cost of compensatory education to range from 20% to 55% of general education.

<sup>v</sup> The Congressional Research Service estimates that 40% of the national average per pupil expenditure would be \$2,827 in the 2003 school year.

<sup>vi</sup>The Congressional Research Service estimates that the total cost of funding Title 1 payments to school districts at the full funding level of 40% of the national average per pupil expenditure would be \$28.852 billion in fiscal year 2003.

---

<sup>vii</sup>The Department of Education indicates that 3.5 million students are enrolled in 8,652 Title 1 schools that have failed to meet state academic standards for at least two years, and that 55% of these students are in rural schools.

<sup>viii</sup> Department of Education estimates.

<sup>ix</sup> Department of Education estimates.

<sup>x</sup> The average cost of providing English language instruction in the 2003 school year is estimated at \$667 per student, derived from Department of Education cost data, adjusted for inflation, from the fiscal year 2000 bilingual instructional services comprehensive school grants program.

<sup>xi</sup> Unpublished data provided by the Congressional Research Service indicate that states have identified 4,043,227 students with limited English proficiency in consolidated applications to the Department of Education.

<sup>xii</sup>The Department of Education estimates that the average cost of educating a student with disabilities is about 2.22 times its estimated \$7,402 average cost of educating a non-disabled student in fiscal year 2003. Therefore, the total average cost of educating a student with a disability would be about \$16,443, and the federal contribution toward this cost authorized under IDEA would be \$2,961 (40% of \$7,402) in fiscal year 2003.

<sup>xiii</sup>Department of Education (2001), *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 2000*.

<sup>xiv</sup> U.S. Conference of Mayors (2001), *A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, 2001*.

<sup>xv</sup> Estimates derived from data in Department of Education (2001), *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 2000*. Of 930,200 homeless children identified in this report, 257,076 are preschool children and 663,134 are school age children. Of the school age children, 23% or 152,521 children are reported to not attend school regularly, and 13% or 86,207 children are reported to not attend school at all.

---

<sup>xvi</sup> Because the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act authorizes such sums as necessary in fiscal year 2003 for the *Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program*, the fiscal year 2003 authorization level assumed here is \$71.75 million – the fiscal year 2002 authorization of \$70 million adjusted for inflation as projected by the Congressional Budget Office. The additional \$21.75 million authorized in fiscal year 2003 would serve an additional 138,000 children over the request, at an estimated average cost of \$117 per child. The cost per child estimate is derived from fiscal year 2000 program data adjusted for inflation as projected by the Congressional Budget Office.

<sup>xvii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Current Population Reports, *Who’s Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements*.

<sup>xviii</sup> These estimates assume an average cost per child of \$731 in fiscal year 2002 and \$749 in fiscal year 2003 based on Department of Education fiscal year 2002 program data adjusted for inflation as projected by the Congressional Budget Office.

<sup>xix</sup> The number of teachers lacking certification is estimated to be 188,000, calculated by multiplying the number of public school teachers in 2003 as projected by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001), in *Projections of Education Statistics to 2011*, Table 31, by the percentage (6%) of uncertified teachers as estimated by the Department of Education (2002), in *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*.

<sup>xx</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond, National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future (2000), *Solving the Dilemmas of Teacher Supply, Demand, and Standards: How We Can Ensure a Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teacher for Every Child*.

<sup>xxi</sup> The Education Trust provided these estimates based on calculations by Richard Ingersoll, University of Pennsylvania, using data drawn from the Department of Education’s 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey.

<sup>xxii</sup> Craig Jerald, The Education Trust (2002), *All Talk: No Action: Putting an End to Out-of-Field Teaching*.

---

<sup>xxiii</sup> These estimates assume the average cost of providing a high quality mentoring and professional development program for a new teacher is \$4,295, based on a National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future estimate of \$4,000 in *Solving the Dilemmas of Teacher Supply, Demand and Standards: How We Can Ensure a Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teacher for Every Child*, adjusted for inflation as estimated by the Congressional Budget Office. These estimates also assume that school districts use all *Teacher Quality State Grant Program* funds in excess of the amount needed to pay salaries for teachers hired in 2001 and previous years under the antecedent *Class Size Reduction Program* for teacher mentoring and professional development activities.

<sup>xxiv</sup> This estimate assumes that teachers have an average of 22 students in the classroom based on 2001 unpublished estimates from the National Center for Education Statistics; 92,000 teachers multiplied by an average of 22 students each equals 2,024,000 students.

<sup>xxv</sup> Keith Curry Lance (2000), *How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study*.

<sup>xxvi</sup> As cited in Monique Fields, “Librarians Say Update of Books Overdue”, *Tennessean*, February 3, 2000.

<sup>xxvii</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (1998), *School Library Media Centers: 1993-1994*.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Because the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act authorizes such sums as necessary in FY 2003 for the *Literacy Through School Libraries Program*, the fiscal year 2003 authorization level assumed here is \$256.25 million – the fiscal year 2002 authorization of \$250 million adjusted for inflation as projected by the Congressional Budget Office.

<sup>xxix</sup> These estimates assume an average cost of \$19.39 per school library book, derived from a cost of \$18.58 per school library book reported in the March 2001 *School Library Journal*, adjusted for inflation as projected by the Congressional Budget Office.

---

<sup>xxx</sup> These estimates assume that the average comprehensive school reform grant is \$70,224 per school; that 70% of comprehensive reform schools are elementary schools with an average enrollment of 477 students and 30% of comprehensive reform schools are secondary schools with an average enrollment of 706 students, based on Department of Education program data and average school size data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2001), *Digest of Education Statistics*.

<sup>xxxi</sup> See Congressman David Obey press statement (March 20, 2001), *A Real Test of Values: Investing in Education vs. Tax Cuts On Income Above \$200,000*.

<sup>xxxii</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2001), *Digest of Education Statistics*, page 175.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Department of Education (2002), *Fiscal Year 2003 Budget Summary*.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Estimates presented in Congressman David Obey press statement (March 20, 2001), *A Real Test of Values: Investing in Education vs. Tax Cuts On Income Above \$200,000*, indicated that the federal share of total national elementary and secondary education expenditures could exceed 13% if the average annual growth in federal elementary and education expenditures between fiscal years 2002 and 2006 was 16.7%. The increase in elementary and secondary education expenditures in fiscal year 2002 was 17.1%.